



Working Together for NSW

An agreement between the NSW Government and
NSW non-government human services organisations



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FOREWORD FROM THE NSW GOVERNMENT

The New South Wales Government values the vital contribution that the non-government sector makes to building a fairer, more sustainable and inclusive society.

The non-government sector plays an essential role in the planning, delivery and management of human services in New South Wales and a significant role in policy and community development and in promoting community participation and engagement.

Close to \$1.5 billion is provided each year in funding to non-government organisations in New South Wales, through direct State Government funding or through joint State/Commonwealth funding programs.

The non-government sector has demonstrated a commitment to good performance and has worked in partnership with the NSW Government on the delivery of major performance and infrastructure improvement programs, including the Better Service Delivery Program and the Grants Administration Review.

The *Working Together for New South Wales Agreement* provides a framework to build on these partnerships and to continue to strive to improve the way the Government and non-government sectors work together.

The NSW Government endorses this Agreement and is committed to its implementation to help strengthen the ability of the Government and non-government human services organisations to improve the well-being of individuals, families and communities in New South Wales.



Bob Carr MP
Premier

FOREWORD FROM THE NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Over 7000 organisations, from the largest charities to the smallest self help groups, currently comprise the NSW non-government human services sector.

These organisations provide a myriad of essential, front line services across the State, whilst also making a major contribution to the development of local communities and advocating for improved social justice and well being for disadvantaged citizens.

The non-government sector has a critical relationship with the NSW Government and its agencies through regulation, funding, policy development, program planning, project partnering and service delivery.

In our challenging and changing economic and social environment, non-government human services organisations are seeking to continuously improve:

- the quality and effectiveness of what they do;
- the appropriateness of the accountabilities they have for public funds, member's priorities and client interests; and
- their capacities to strengthen community well-being.

The non-government sector is also a significant contributor to NSW economic activity, through its multi million dollar turnover, its substantial provision of jobs, volunteer opportunities and social infrastructure and its contribution and use of assets.

The *Working Together for New South Wales Agreement* provides an opportunity to further develop collaborative efforts by the Government and non-government sectors and increase positive results for people and communities.

The NSW non-government human services sector endorses this Agreement as a fully fledged partner, not as an agent of the NSW Government.

The sector endorses this Agreement and is committed to implementing it as a key tool to heighten the positive attributes of all our relationships with the New South Wales Government and to grow the capacities of organisations in both sectors to make a sustainable difference for individuals, families and communities.

Gary Moore
Chairperson

Forum of Non-Government Agencies (FONGA)



BACKGROUND

In 1997, the Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) proposed to the NSW Government that a statement outlining the shared objectives and the complementary roles of, and the principles of the relationship between the NSW Government and the NSW not-for-profit human services sector be developed.

This initiative was informed by the establishment of a Compact between the United Kingdom (UK) Government and the UK non-government human services sector, the work of the Voluntary Sector Initiative in Canada and the interest in similar initiatives in other jurisdictions around Australia.

In March 1999, the NSW Government made a commitment to "negotiate a Compact between the government and the community and voluntary sectors" as part of its Supporting Families and Strengthening Communities policy.

The NSW Government also has a broad social justice role as evidenced in successive Social Justice Directions Statements. The Government's key objective is to work in partnership with the community to build a fairer, sustainable and more inclusive society.

Within this policy framework, the NSW Government and non-government human service organisations have been working to strengthen local communities, build non-government organisation (NGO) capacity and establishing partnerships with communities to address complex local and regional issues.

This Agreement outlines why and how Government and NGOs can focus their efforts in partnership.

The goals, values, principles and framework for relationships between the NSW Government and non-government human services organisations, which are outlined in this Agreement, will also underpin other key initiatives such as the Review of Grants Administration and the Better Service Delivery Program.

AN INTERDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between the NSW Government and non-government organisations¹ is complex and interdependent. Non-government organisations deliver key human services. They also provide essential community infrastructure, which helps to deliver and support government funded programs and services.

Government funding and regulation, strong community support and more recently, contributions of expertise and funds from businesses have assisted the development of a large non-government human services sector in NSW.

Non-government organisations also play a pivotal role in community development and capacity building, the identification of community need and the development of new ways of responding to need. Government, and its agencies, often seek the advice of non-government organisations in the development and implementation of new social policies and human services programs.

Non-government organisations receive government funding for a diverse range of services and initiatives, linked to agreed objectives and specific outcomes or to the facilitation of community development practices.

The funding relationship, whilst significant, is one part of the overall relationship between the Government and non-government organisations in NSW. The key principles underpinning good practice in grants administration in NSW are therefore incorporated in this Agreement.

Non-government organisations are also independent bodies that are free to pursue their goals, which may involve advocating for changes in Government policies and priorities. In this sense, there is a healthy tension inherent in the relationship between Government and the non-government sector. This Agreement has been formulated on the understanding that an independent, diverse non-government sector is an essential component of a democratic, socially-inclusive society².

It is also based on the understanding that Government is democratically elected and must respond to changing community and client needs by moving its resources and priorities when required. In such circumstances, this document is intended to act as a framework for consultation and negotiation between government and NGOs.

¹ Non-government organisations refers to not for profit, non-government bodies

² This Agreement focuses on working relationships between the NSW Government, its agencies and the human services component of the NSW not for profit, non-government sector. The longer term objective is to broaden this Agreement to include all parts of the NSW not for profit, non-government sector.

PURPOSE OF THIS AGREEMENT

The purpose of this Agreement is to strengthen the ability of the NSW Government and non-government human services organisations³ in NSW to achieve better outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

The Agreement acknowledges the value in non-government organisations and Government and its agencies developing and building on improved working relationships. It recognises that Government and non-government organisations may play different roles in achieving a common purpose.

The main benefits are:

- an increased awareness and understanding of the contributions that the NSW Government and NGO sectors make to building a fairer, sustainable and more inclusive society
- improved communication and increased constructive dialogue
- clearer expectations
- promotion of standards of good practice
- improved quality of services and programs provided by both Government and NGOs to the community.

STATUS OF THE AGREEMENT

Working Together for NSW was developed jointly by the NSW Government through the Premier's Department and Human Service Chief Executives and the NSW human services NGO sector through the Forum of Non-Government Agencies (FONGA).

It is not a legal instrument: rather it is a set of shared goals, values and principles to guide working relationships.

Its authority is derived from its endorsement by the NSW Government and the NSW human services NGO sector through an extensive consultation process. It applies to all Government and non-government organisations involved in the planning, funding, regulation and delivery of human services.

This document provides a general framework and an enabling mechanism to enhance the relationship between the two sectors. It is not exhaustive. It is meant to underpin and support existing and future local, regional and Statewide partnership agreements, as well as agreements between individual government agencies and NGOs.

SHARED GOALS

Our shared goals include ensuring that, to the maximum extent possible:

- people are able to participate in economic and social life
- decisions about the distribution of services and resources are based on need and equity
- people have opportunities for genuine participation in decisions that affect their lives
- interests are respected and promoted, regardless of age, race, disability, gender, sexuality or religion
- planning and delivery of human services is approached in a coordinated and collaborative manner within and between Government and the non-government human services sector
- communities are strengthened through building local capacities and productive networks.

³ Non-government human services includes organisations working in the areas of health, community services, ageing, disability and home care, children's services, housing, education and training, juvenile justice, community safety, corrective services, transport, urban development, rural affairs and regional development. Some also focus on issues and services for specific populations groups including Aboriginal communities, women, men, youth, children and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It does not include services delivered by schools, which are accredited and/or registered by the Board of Studies NSW.

SHARED VALUES

This document and the relationships it seeks to define and improve are underpinned by a shared commitment to:

- the principles of equity, access and participation
- the maintenance and further development of an independent, robust and diverse non-government sector
- transparency and community participation in decision making
- trust and respect in partnership arrangements
- delivery of high quality services and the practice of effective community development.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Within the context of this Agreement, the role of Government includes:

- being accountable to all citizens in New South Wales and acting in their collective best interest
- identifying social needs and services, projects and programs to address these needs
- selecting the most appropriate avenues to address the identified need including providing services directly or via the funding of non-government organisations
- providing resources to maintain community infrastructure and build the capacity of non-government organisations
- providing frameworks for consultation and negotiation with the non-government sector and service users in relation to social policy, service delivery and expenditure
- determining the best funding arrangements to ensure sustainable outcomes in line with planning and results
- negotiating performance management arrangements for services and initiatives funded by Government.

ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Within the context of this Agreement, the role of non-government organisations includes:

- partnering with Government in its planning and service delivery role by identifying social needs and services, projects and programs to address these needs
- advocating in the interests of disadvantaged people and communities across NSW
- facilitating the participation of people and communities in policy and decision-making processes
- contributing resources, including unpaid human resources, to community development and the provision of programs and services
- identifying, developing and managing innovative programs and services which effectively meet community needs and build community infrastructure
- ensuring that services are developed and provided in a non-discriminatory manner.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE RELATIONSHIP

The following broad principles are essential as the basis for a strong relationship between the Government and the non-government sector:

- **evidence-based approach:** policy, program development and service delivery should be based on reliable evidence
- **outcomes:** decisions should be informed by a focus on real outcomes for people and communities
- **accountability:** both Government agencies and non-government organisations must be accountable and transparent in the way in which they spend public funds, in a manner appropriate to the level of expenditure
- **respect:** both Government and non-government organisations must respect each other's roles and acknowledge that these roles may lead to differences of opinion around particular issues
- **communication:** wherever possible, Government agencies and non-government organisations should make open communication and consultation a priority, particularly where changes to policies, programs or services are being considered or advocated
- **independence:** non-government organisations are independent agencies that are responsible and accountable for their own performance and management. They are accountable to their members in the operation of their organisation. Where NGOs receive government funding they are also accountable to Government for their performance in relation to the service or initiative being funded
- **inclusiveness:** the Government is obliged to balance the interest of all New South Wales citizens and has a responsibility to allocate resources accordingly. This may involve changes to policies, administrative and funding arrangements. The Government is accountable to the electorate for such changes.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE FUNDING RELATIONSHIP

In addition, the following principles enhance the quality of processes and outcomes in the funding relationship between Government and non-government organisations:

- **value for money:** obtaining the best mix of services to meet the community's needs within available funding and selecting the mix of resources that delivers the best possible outcomes to clients
- **fairness, integrity and transparency:** ensuring that the Government grants system is and is seen to be accessible, appropriate and fair
- **cooperation:** Government agencies and non-government organisations will work to promote a funding relationship based on reciprocity
- **diversity:** embodying the recognition of diversity in the community in grants administration practice
- **consistency:** grants administration procedures should be consistent within programs, across individual government agencies, across government and as funding programs involving non-government organisations evolve
- **probity:** grants administration must be conducted in an environment of integrity, honesty and scrutiny
- **coordination:** outcomes for people and communities can be improved through better alignment of planning, program design and service delivery within and across both Government and non-government human services sectors.

BUILDING STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

The Government will:

In order to promote stronger relationships between the Government and non-government organisations, in the interests of disadvantaged people and communities, the Government, at a state, regional and local level, will:

- ensure that the views of non-government organisations are sought and fully considered in social policy priorities and changes to human service programs
- wherever possible, consult non-government organisations on issues that are likely to affect them in a manner that allows a reasonable time for response
- establish appropriate opportunities for non-government organisations to fully participate in human services planning and evaluation processes
- implement and upgrade its funding policies and practices in a manner which builds constructive relationships with the non-government human services sector
- make available, in a timely manner, appropriate and adequate information and data to non-government organisations
- recognise the interest of non-government organisations to pursue their own organisational goals, but expect that the objectives of any government funding received will be fully met by the organisation
- in setting broad policy direction, recognise the impact of overall Government policy on communities including those that are disadvantaged
- take account of the challenges facing particular types of non-government organisations, particularly smaller organisations and organisations representing or working within disadvantaged communities
- enhance the capacities of non-government organisations, by introducing streamlined and appropriate funding practices through the Review of Grants Administration initiative and negotiating effective industry development initiatives.

Non-government organisations will:

- promote the participation of disadvantaged people and communities in the planning and management of services
- provide disadvantaged people and communities with opportunities to participate in the formation of policy positions and responses to government consultations
- deliver services and initiatives funded by Government in a transparent, accountable and professional manner and in accordance with agreements negotiated for these purposes
- pursue policy development, program design and advocacy through various means including consultation and collaboration with government agencies
- respect and maintain the confidentiality of Government information, when access to information is provided on that basis
- participate in broad policy development
- make available appropriate and adequate information and data to Government funding agencies
- work towards delivering long term consistent service delivery and community development programs with a focus on continuous improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The NSW Government and the Forum of Non-Government Agencies (FONGA) will establish a joint reference group to monitor the implementation of this Compact and to provide assistance to both Government agencies and non-government organisations in the application of this Agreement.

Both Government agencies and NGOs will use their best endeavours to apply the contents of this Agreement to their cross Government, cross sector and individual agency relationships with each other. This will include building appropriate organisational structures to support open communication, community participation and collaboration between Government and non-government organisations in planning, policy development, program design and service delivery and review.

The Communities Division, Department of Community Services will work with the Human Service agencies and FONGA to develop an appropriate communication strategy to promote the Agreement to Government agencies and NGOs.